

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Matt Jesick, Project Manager
JL for Jennifer Steingasser, Deputy Director

DATE: October 30, 2020

SUBJECT: Supplemental Memorandum for Case #20-18, 1319 South Capitol Street
Design Review in the CG-2 Zone
Applicability of Small Area Plan and Comprehensive Plan Framework Element

Design Review case 20-18 is for a multi-family residential building at 1319 South Capitol Street. The proposal includes the incorporation of existing rowhouse buildings, and is subject to inclusionary zoning. The site is subject to mandatory design review under the provisions of the Capitol Gateway zone and the specific criteria for Zoning Commission review, as analyzed in the OP report at Exhibit 17. At the October 26th public hearing on this application, the Zoning Commission asked the Office of Planning (OP) to prepare a supplemental memo addressing how the project would be not inconsistent with the Southwest Neighborhood Plan and the recently adopted Framework Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Please find that discussion below.

Southwest Neighborhood Plan

The Southwest Neighborhood Plan, was adopted by City Council in 2015 to supplement the Comprehensive Plan and provide more detail for planning decisions in the Southwest neighborhood. Although the SAP does not provide a great deal of detail for this location in particular, the project would help to achieve a number of the Plan's goals for the neighborhood, summarized on pp. 5-8:

- Enhance pedestrian connections and safety throughout the neighborhood.
- Support the transformation of South Capitol Street into a high density, urban boulevard that establishes a robust pedestrian realm.
- Adopt Sustainable DC goals to showcase the Southwest neighborhood as a steward of green, sustainable practices targeting stormwater management, healthy living, and energy efficiency.
- Maintain a mix of affordable and market-rate residential units that better serve community needs.
- Ensure that future development is compatible with the existing design of the community.

The project would also help to achieve a written policy of the SAP to create new affordable housing sized for families (p. 4 and p. 75).

Comprehensive Plan Framework Element

The project would be not inconsistent with the recently-adopted Framework Element, and would help to further a number of the Comprehensive Plan's Guiding Principles outlined in that chapter:

1. The District seeks to create and support an equitable and inclusive city. Growth must be managed equitably to support all District residents... An equitable and inclusive city includes access to housing that is healthy, safe, and affordable for a range of household types, sizes, and incomes in all neighborhoods... 219.1
2. Change in the District of Columbia is both inevitable and desirable. The key is to manage change in ways that protect the positive aspects of life in the city, such as local cultural heritage, and reduce negatives such as poverty, crime, food deserts, displacement, and homelessness. 219.2
3. A city must be diverse to thrive, and the District cannot sustain itself by only attracting small, affluent households. To retain residents and attract a diverse population, the city should provide services that support families. A priority must be placed on sustaining and promoting safe neighborhoods offering health care, quality education, transportation, childcare, parks, libraries, arts and cultural facilities, and housing for families. 219.3
4. Diversity also means maintaining and enhancing the District's mix of housing types. Housing should be developed for households of different sizes, including growing families as well as singles and couples, and for all income levels. 219.4
7. Redevelopment and infill opportunities along corridors and near transit stations will be an important component of reinvigorating and enhancing our neighborhoods. Development on such sites must be designed to respect the integrity of stable neighborhoods and the broader community context, and encourage housing and amenities for low-income households, who rely more on transit. Adequate infrastructure capacity should be ensured as growth occurs. 219.7
8. Growth in the District benefits not only District residents, but the region as well. By accommodating a larger number of jobs and residents, we can create the critical mass needed to support new services, sustain public transit, and improve regional environmental quality. 219.8
11. The residential character of neighborhoods must be protected, maintained and improved. Many District neighborhoods possess social, economic, historic, and physical qualities that make them unique and desirable places in which to live. As the District continues to grow, more residents, and those of varied socio-economic backgrounds, should be accommodated, including the production and preservation of affordable housing, while using zoning, design, and other means to retain the qualities that physically characterize these neighborhoods and make them attractive... 220.3
13. The recent population boom has triggered a crisis of affordability in the city, creating a hardship for many District residents and changing the character of neighborhoods. The preservation of existing affordable housing and the production of new affordable housing, especially for low-income and workforce households, are essential to avoid a deepening of racial and economic divides in the city, and must occur city-wide to achieve fair housing objectives. Affordable renter-and owner- occupied housing production and preservation is central to the idea of growing more inclusively, as is the utilization of tools such as public housing, community land trusts, and limited equity cooperatives that

help keep the costs of land affordable, particularly in areas with low homeownership rates and those at risk of cost increases due to housing speculation. 220.5

14. The District of Columbia contains many buildings and sites that contribute to its identity. Protecting historic resources through preservation laws and other programs is essential to retain the heritage that defines and distinguishes the city. Special efforts should be made to conserve row houses as the defining element of many District neighborhoods, and to restore neighborhood “main streets” through sensitive renovation and updating... 220.6
30. Washington's wide avenues are a lasting legacy of the 1791 L'Enfant Plan and are still one of the city's most distinctive features. The “great streets” of the city should be reinforced as an element of Washington's design through transportation, streetscape, and economic development programs. 222.3
34. The District's communities are connected by a shared heritage of urban design, reflecting the legacy of the L'Enfant Plan, the McMillan Plan, the Height Act of 1910, and preservation of much of the historic urban fabric. After more than two centuries of building, the nation's capital is still a remarkable place. Urban design and streetscape policies must retain the historic, majestic, and beautiful qualities that make Washington unique among American cities. 222.7
35. Focus the city's resilience goals on supporting inclusive growth for all residents, preparing the city for the impacts of climate change, and embracing advances in technology, while minimizing the negative impacts of change. 223.1
38. As the nation's capital, the District should be a role model for environmental sustainability. Building construction and renovation should minimize the use of non-renewable resources, promote energy and water conservation, encourage the use of distributed energy resources like rooftop solar, and reduce harmful effects on the natural environment. 223.4
39. Planning decisions should improve the health of District residents by reducing exposure to hazardous materials, improving the quality of surface and groundwater, and encouraging land-use patterns and land uses that reduce air pollution and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel. 223.5

The project would also not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan's land use maps, which are described in the Framework Element. The Generalized Policy Map shows the subject site as part of a Land Use Change Area¹, which “are areas where change to a different land use from what exists today is anticipated. In some cases, the Future Land Use Map depicts the specific mix of uses expected for these areas” (Comprehensive Plan, Section 225.9). The Framework Element goes on to further describe Land Use Change Areas:

The guiding philosophy in the Land Use Change Areas is to encourage and facilitate new development and promote the adaptive reuse of existing structures. Many of these areas have the capacity to become mixed-use communities containing housing, retail shops, services, workplaces, parks, and civic facilities. The Comprehensive Plan's Area Elements provide additional policies to guide development and redevelopment within the Land Use Change Areas, including the desired mix of uses in each area. 225.11

¹ Through the Comp Plan update process, the designation for this site, and much of Buzzard Point, is proposed to change from Land Use Change Area to Neighborhood Enhancement Area.

As Land Use Change Areas are redeveloped, the District aspires to create high- quality neighborhoods that demonstrate exemplary site and architectural design and innovative environmental features, compatible with nearby neighborhoods, protect cultural and historic assets, and provide significant affordable-housing and employment opportunities... 225.12

The Future Land Use Map designates the site as appropriate for Medium Density Residential and Moderate Density Commercial mixed use. The Framework Element describes Medium Density Residential as a designation used for:

neighborhoods or areas generally, but not exclusively, suited for mid-rise apartment buildings. The Medium Density Residential designation also may apply to taller residential buildings surrounded by large areas of permanent open space. Pockets of low and moderate density housing may exist within these areas, Density typically ranges from 1.8 to 4.0 FAR, although greater density may be possible when complying with Inclusionary Zoning or when approved through a Planned Unit Development. The RA-3 Zone District is consistent with the Medium Density Residential category, and other zones may also apply. 227.7

Moderate Density Commercial is described as follows:

This designation is used to define shopping and service areas that are somewhat greater in scale and intensity than the Low-Density Commercial areas. Retail, office, and service businesses are the predominant uses. Areas with this designation range from small business districts that draw primarily from the surrounding neighborhoods to larger business districts that draw from a broader market area. Buildings are larger and/or taller than those in Low Density Commercial areas. Density typically ranges between a FAR of 2.5 and 4.0, with greater density possible when complying with Inclusionary Zoning or when approved through a Planned Unit Development. The MU-5 and MU-7 Zone Districts are representative of zone districts consistent with the Moderate Density Commercial category, and other zones may also apply. 227.11

The proposed development would not be inconsistent with the land use designations shown on the Plan's land use and policy maps and described in the Framework Element. The development is consistent with the existing zoning, including an FAR of 7.2, which is achieved through the provision of inclusionary zoning units. Furthermore, "The Future Land Use Map is intended to be used in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan's policies and actions" (227.1), and this proposed development would be consistent with a number of Plan policies from the Land Use, Transportation, Urban Design, and Lower Anacostia Waterfront and Near Southwest Elements.